

Clutching her jacket around her shoulders, hefting her heavy backpack, Mallory gingerly stepped over the earth still soft from last night's rain, cold moisture seeping through her boots. It was insane for her to be out here - and yet she couldn't let this go. Maybe she still wasn't fully recovered from the fairground fiasco - another story for another time - but for the past several weeks, it's like something in the air had been out of equilibrium. She swore she saw impossible things - strange shadows in rooms starved of light; something from one room appearing in another; her phone ringing with familiar numbers but no one being on the line. And that's not even to mention her rash of clothing-related misfortunes she could never seem to shake! Could it all be the result of something... unnatural? The logical explanations were there - perspective tricks, forgetfulness, spam-block, her just being super clumsy! - but it was all so often and so random... fittingly enough, the thought itself haunted her, the idea that maybe, just maybe, there was something beyond reality at play... Over the past few days, Mallory had been scouring up to the 99th page of internet forums and long-running blogs which purported documentation of paranormal activity - steering clear of the obviously-satanic stuff, for obvious reasons - a search which led her to a text recommended by OccultForDummies.com: "The Graceful and Deferent Verses," which was conveniently available in a pair of volumes at the local library. While the majority of the books from her search outlined ways to actively reach out to otherworldly forces - the exact opposite of Mallory's goal! - she found some chapters detailing rituals meant to dispel any potential negative energy which might attract spirits. Not to say she believed herself the target of bad juju or whatever... but better safe than sorry... and reviews online did give the books a 4.8 star average...

Which led her to her insane trip to the cemetery. According to the books, a place of strong spiritual energy was a necessity, something about revealing yourself to the spirits plainly so they know exactly who to leave alone, or something. Truth be told, Mallory didn't quite understand, but at this point it was going to be like baking a recipe: she didn't know the science of why a little lemon would bring out more flavor, she just trusted the process! One step at a time, and it would all work out!

Scanning the wet grass and weather-worn gravestones, Mallory gripped her windbreaker tighter, kneading at the zipper. The books made mention of doing rituals at the 'times when the spirits are most active' meaning 3 or 4 am, but there was no way Mallory was coming out in the dead of night for this! Just being out in an overcast afternoon, the smell of the disinterred earth and the skeeves of being around so many dead people that made it feel like she was constantly being surveilled... Mallory was already about to turn tail and run! But she already went this long way... if only she didn't have to go at this alone, but she'd endured more than enough ghost movies with Candice and her constant "Come on, really's to know she'd be the only one to entertain the idea of the supernatural being at all real. Not saying she did, either, but still... worst case scenario, nothing happens, right? Safe over sorry any day.

Finally, past an aging tree so old and gnarled it nearly twisted into itself, Mallory spotted a large enough space between the rows of graves. All of a sudden, she noticed her breathing was getting shallower. What was there to be afraid of? Just wet dirt and stone, just words on a page. Nothing was going to happen! Trying to take longer breaths, Mallory crouched down and slid her backpack around to her front, very intentionally looking at it and not at the gravestones sat silently beside her. Out from her backpack came the Verses, as well as a couple candles made from a very particular honeycomb wax, and a plastic baggie containing a mix of powders - some talcum, ground amethyst, and some kind of special salt with some coarse yet oddly sweet stench like burning leaves. Preparations at the ready, Mallory opened up the first volume and skimmed the pages for the ritual she'd pegged for her best bet, fidgeting against a chilly wind as she flipped pages. Why hadn't she worn something sturdier? The weather report said it was going to be much warmer than this, hadn't it? As it was, wearing only a thigh-length burgundy skirt and pink sweater under an evergreen windbreaker, Mallory felt goosebumps up her bare legs! Maybe it was just the wind making it colder, she thought, as another gust tugged at her jacket... she tried to remember, had it been windy when she got there? Gah, focus! Mallory began flipping pages faster. Stop imagining things! Nothing's wrong, but once we do this it'll be SUPER not wrong!

Before long, Mallory found the warding ritual she was looking for. A previous reader had written helpful notes in the margins next to every spell; this one was 'guaranteed' to transform negative energy. After lighting the candles and carefully arranging them into what seemed like a perfect triangle around herself, she

then sprinkled the powdered mix onto the ground to create the proper shape, quietly mumbling the prescribed chant: "Abite spiritus, cruciatus amplius. Abite spiritus..." Mallory repeated the words again and again. What language it was or what it meant didn't matter - the results did. And so she dutifully recited them, keeping her eyes on her work, not the gravestones, not the crow calling from nowhere, not even the sky as she felt darker clouds collect overhead, hopefully not spelling more rain... Gah! Focus! "Abite spiritus..." When the triangle was complete, Mallory stood in the middle of the triangle and read the next chant louder: "Derelinquas me... noli me vexare... revelata ex-... exilum."

As the final words of the verse left Mallory's mouth, however, a strange new kind of cold feeling rushed through her very being. More specifically, a weird sensation like itching down her legs pulled her attention off the book. Mallory gasped! She couldn't believe it! Totally by itself, she watched as her skirt rolled further and further up her thighs, a gentle glow like lightning bugs all around it! The wind carried a gentle chitter like a forgotten voice being remembered at long last as her skirt rose! Higher, higher, almost to her hips... when all of a sudden it stopped and dropped back to its original position on her legs.

Blinking, Mallory shook her head and tried refocusing on the book. She was just tired, was all! Freaking herself out, seeing things, hearing them too! Wait, had she undone the zipper on her windbreaker at some point? Whatever, just read the next lines... why did the sky seem like it was getting darker? "Um... um- e - ex- er, revelata... exilum... in..." No sooner had she resumed the recitation, however, that she once again felt the startling cold wash over herself! The chittering wind picked up again, as her skirt once again gently glowed and lifted! "I-in... ah..." Mallory's mouth went slack as her skirt continued to rise up her legs, higher, higher yet... What's more, it wasn't just the sky darkening - just past noon a minute ago, Mallory looked around to find a midnight darkness had engulfed the graveyard! Up where the sun should float was nothing at all, no clouds or stars above, just an endless expanse of infinite blackness! Mallory slowly spun in place in utter awe and terror! What on earth was happening?! And that feeling of being surveilled was getting worse... she wasn't alone! Out of the shadows encircling her, she could see... shapes, nothing more distinct than that. They didn't look solid, instead like collections of the same sort of lightning bug lights that were lifting her skirt. The brighter and more collected the shapes became, the louder the chittering on the wind, the darker the sudden nightfall, the colder the fear in her tummy! Mallory gasped and sank into herself as more shapes swarmed around her, brighter, louder... the chittering deepened and became stretched and tinny with echoes, like voices speaking from a million miles away! Suddenly, the lights came together to form a chorus of glowing, cackling skulls!

Mallory's eyes went wider than her wordless mouth! What the heck?! Were these... ghosts?! Like, actual GHOSTS?! All the air felt like it was knocked right out of her body, her knees buckling out of pure terror! There was no other explanation! These were real, like REALLY real! It was so unbelievable! Mallory's heart hammered so hard and so fast against her ribcage she worried it might burst clean through her body! Actual ghosts, actual supernatural things happening all around her! So overwhelming... so HORRIFYING!

Suddenly, the laughter surged and the skulls swirled faster around her - and it only took a second to realize why: her skirt had been lifted past her hips, all the way up to around her waist, totally exposing her lacy white panties! "Aahhh!" A squeal escaped Mallory's lips as skulls floated close to her intimates, jeering and sneering as their pale light illuminated the fabric and teased the treasure within! As Mallory awkwardly crossed her legs, a new type of terror overtook her: humiliation! Why were the ghosts doing this? Why torment her like this? They weren't what made these things happen... were they?!

The book! In the chaos of the moment, Mallory had totally blanked! If she finished the ritual, she could ward these pervy ghosts away! Shutting out the cackling overtaking her on all sides, she squinted and leaned closer to the candles to illuminate the words. "N- noli me... vex- vexare..." Wait, she read that already, didn't she? Oh crud, where did she leave off? Would rereading ruin it? "Um... er... rev- revelata..." Okay, she definitely read that before! But wait, it was on a lower line... so it must be the next part, right?

While Mallory struggled to find the proper spot to start reading again, she failed to notice the ghostly glow transferring from her lifted skirt to her panties! In a slow, teasing motion, the ghostly grasp tugged at her

r underwear, inching them lower and lower, revealing an inch of her butt crack, then a half moon, before abruptly whisking the panties down to her feet, rendering Mallory naked from the waist down!

Frazzled and trying to force herself to focus as she was, Mallory didn't even register how her underpants had dropped to her ankles! "Go- AH!" Mallory yelped as she finally realized why her bottom half had gotten even colder! Instinctively, Mallory doubled over and pressed the book over her crotch! Shivering from both the cold and the embarrassment, Mallory felt her bare ass cheeks shaking and quivering to her delighted undead audience! They looked just like floating skulls, but Mallory swore she somehow heard applause!

Quickly, face burning red, Mallory bent over to pick up her dropped undies! It was an awkward attempt, what with trying to hold the heavy tome over her lap with one hand while simultaneously trying to reach over and past it to her ankles with the other - all she really wound up doing was giving the ghoulish congregation behind her quite the sight! Though the darkened sky held no celestial object, Mallory was accidentally giving the swarming specters as full a moon as they came! Amused laughter echoed off the graves tones, as the ghostly skulls beheld the sight of Mallory's upraised, quivering boooooooty! The ghostly skulls shared a wordless glance, a laughing agreement that the fun was only beginning...

At last, Mallory's fingers grazed the waistband of her stolen underwear! Before she could get a firm grip, however, the ghostly glow reappeared around the undergarment! Mallory gasped, startled and confused, as she watched her panties rise back up her legs by themselves! Up her calves, past her knees, her thighs, all the way to their proper place on her hips... but they kept going up! "A-aah!" Mallory yelped as the ghostly power continued to yank her underwear higher, digging deeper into her private places!

"KYAAAAAAH!" The tome fell from Mallory's fingers as her hands flew to her privates, trying in vain to pry her panties out from her privates! Up and down, up and down, Mallory's underwear seemed to move in time with the skulls' cackling cadence, a rapid rhythm that rubbed frilly fabric like fire up Mallory's butt and crotch! "P- please! S- st- stop- AH!" Mallory's teary-eyed begging only seemed to incense the swirling corporeal crowd, as unseen hands pulled her underwear harder, faster, so hard Mallory was lifted off the ground, the toes of her boots barely scraping the grass! "YAGH! OHH! StOPP!" Wildly, Mallory kicked and swung her arms out at the ghostly glow, but her limbs just passed through! Toes kneading in her boots, gasping and yelping all the while, Mallory carefully lifted her hands away from her crotch to instead try and pull her skirt back down from around her torso - maybe she could push them away? As she lifted her hands, however, Mallory froze - and not on purpose!

"Wh- wh... wha?..." Mallory watched in horrified awe as the ghostly glow materialized around the sleeves of her sweater. At first, it was like what she'd imagine sticking your arms in TV static would feel like - kinda fuzzy, buzzy, almost liquidy. As the glow brightened, however, the sensation became firmer, harder, like massive hands wrapping around her forearms! In fact, the harder she looked, the more she saw the glow form into proper fingers! "H- hey!" Horror racked Mallory's brain as she squirmed, trying to regain control of her arms, until she realized that they weren't possessing her or her arms - they were grabbing her jacket! Right on cue, the ghostly hands started pulling her windbreaker off! "NO! Agh!" Mallory yelped, helpless to do anything but bounce from another hard wedgie, as ghostly hands whisked her windbreaker off her back! She'd barely have time to register the evergreen garment swallowed by the shadows beyond before the glow reappeared along her arms again!

"NO!" Mallory plead with renewed desperation. "N- not my sweater- AGHHH!" Her underwear shooting another inch up her backside interrupted her, and in that moment, the cackling energy began pulling Mallory's pink sweater up! "NO!" Mallory squealed! "What- whatever I did, I'm sorryYYYYYY!" Another hard pull made it feel like her undies split her right up the middle! As skulls continued to orbit her thighs and admire their work, those up top continued to pull at Mallory's sweater! Though Mallory struggled as best she could, all her attempts at worming free were useless! It was like trying to fight fog! Gradually, taking pleasure in their teasing, the ghostly hands lifted Mallory's sweater inch by inch, slowly revealing her midriff, then higher, until the bottom of the sweater was tugging against the bottom of her boobs! The ghostly skulls seemed to cheer in anticipation, as the glow holding the sweater teasingly kneaded the hem up and do

wn against the bottom of Mallory's breasts, causing them to bounce up and down for the crowd!

Mallory was utterly mortified! Her face flushed from crimson to deathly pale, knowing what was to come! "No! Noommph!" Mallory's cry was muffled by both another tug on her underwear and her sweater floating over her mouth and face, before finally being pulled all the way over her head! The skulls cheered as Mallory's breasts, barely contained by a bra as white and frilly as the underpants being stretched up her privates, heaved into full view! "AHHHH!" Mallory couldn't suppress her scream as her scantily-covered boobs bounced into full view, and her sweater flew off into the darkness, leaving her in only her underwear! "OH! AGH!" As the ghostly energy bounced Mallory with its wedgieing, Mallory's bountiful bust heaved with her, the pale flesh trembling and flouncing, eliciting round after round of shrill laughter from the spirits! The pain, the humiliation, everything all at once swam through Mallory's head and finally knocked her silent, a helpless captive to an army of undead perverts!

Do something! Head swimming with through an infinite ocean of horror and humiliation, one thought surfaced in Mallory's head: Do something! This doesn't stop unless you do something! But what could she do? What would Candice do... she'd focus... she'd stay calm... and she'd think...

The book! The thought hit Mallory like lightning. Where was it? She had to finish the ritual... Through the malevolent glow swarming her body, Mallory dropped her gaze to the grass at her feet to see the fallen tome spread open! Squinting through the darkness and the discomfort, Mallory tried to make out what she had to say next! "D... decre- EEK!" As she tried to read, she felt the hand-like-energy roll down her arms and over her shoulders, centralizing between her shoulder blades! As some of the ghostly energy continued stretching her panties to kingdom come, the rest slipped around the clasp of her bra!

"AH!" Mallory screamed before remembering what she'd just been telling herself - she could stop this! And so she hurriedly dropped her gaze again, to try and parse the word she'd been reading. "Um- AH!... um... d... decrescentia?"

Suddenly, with a the sound of trapped wind rushing away, the cackling dispersed and the feeling of firm hands abruptly vanished! The hold on her underwear was gone too, causing Mallory to drop hard to the ground! "Oof!" Groaning, dazed and aching down below, Mallory shook her head and looked around, while picking the underwear out of her butt crack. Though the ghostly glow was gone, darkness still smothered the graveyard, almost seeming to vibrate with outermost echoes of the laughter. Breathing fast, Mallory scoured the nearby ground for her sweater or jacket, finding nothing. She shivered - in only her disheveled undies, the cold was even worse! At least she still had her skirt! As she readjusted said skirt back into its proper spot on her hips, she kept a watchful eye on her shadowy surroundings, not dropping her guard for a second. Whatever she said had scared the spirits off, but she wasn't free yet!

Quick! The ritual! She tried to first fix her unclasped bra, but couldn't quite reach enough behind her back... finally, still on the clock as she was, Mallory let it remain undone - even though it meant the cotton cups began to slip from properly covering her boobies! - as she scurried on all fours to the dropped book and leaned close to the open pages. "Um... um... okay... tum... tum auget... w- wait!" This was the wrong ritual! The book must have accidentally flipped to another page when it fell! "Oh God oh God oh God..." Mallory murmured at the same rate her heartbeat hammered as she hurriedly flipped back and forth through the tome, desperately seeking the page she'd been reading from but not finding it! If she didn't send these asshole ghosts back where they came from soon, who knows what more they'd do to her?! Unfortunately, Mallory was a little too preoccupied to hear the echoing laughter once again encircling her, not until it was too late!

Nervously tracing a title with her forefinger, Mallory felt fairly confident this was the right ritual - if not the original one then another that would work - when suddenly the pages began flipping themselves before her very eyes! "What?! Oh no no no!" Mallory tried to stop the pages from turning, only for a ghostly skull to scream out from the pages right into her face! "GAHH!" Mallory hurriedly crawled away from the book as the cackling skull shot off into the sky, but she found she couldn't go very far! The shroud of ghostly energy around her returned brighter, innumerable spectral skulls materializing around her! Though she tried

to scramble away, the staticky sensation prickled all up her body again and solidified in clouds around her shoulders and down her legs - Mallory watched in dread as the clouds of energy collected and became skeletal hands holding her in place!

Laughter echoing and multiplying around her, the ghostly forces resumed pulling at Mallory's clothes, again jerking her skirt up around her midsection to once more expose her panties still partly tucked up her sensitive spots! It didn't stay 'partly' for long, however, as skeletal hands gripped the back of the waistband and once again hoisted upward! "GAH!" Mallory howled as the cackling ghosts bounced her backside up and down, friction like fire along her butt crack, her panties fraying between her lips! As some hands occupied themselves with the underwear, others appeared around her skirt, pulling in opposite directions like a game of tug-of-war! They were trying to rip it, Mallory realized! With her shoulders held, though she tried her best to squeeze in her elbows and keep her skirt, though she could hardly move with the spectral hands holding her in place!

It was more than that, though; the hands holding her weren't idle for long! As some pulled Mallory's underwear harder, others began sliding across her shoulders, slowly, teasingly, with others running the length of her legs, up and down, up and down, drifting further inward every pass... Mallory shuddered, stunned! The hands were so cold, yet there was some indescribable warmth behind that cold, just real hands hovering barely an eighth of an inch above the skin, almost not being touched at all, it was almost like being touched by someone in a dream! Just barely able to move her wrists and elbows, Mallory tried in vain to swat the spirits away, but her hands just kept passing through! The attempts, though, seemed to amuse the ghosts, as they all surged in a chorus of catcalling laughter around their captive plaything, a horrible harmony which crescendoed with Mallory's skirt finally tearing in half! "NOOO!" Mallory wailed, watching the sundered halves of her favorite skirt hoisted like victory flags before the floating hands cast the pieces out into the darkness!

"Gah!" Another hard jolt rocked Mallory's privates and snapped her gaze back down just in time to witness two more hands materializing half a foot in front of her chest! Though Mallory braced herself, surprisingly, these hands didn't immediately latch onto her! Instead, they made a big show of wagging their fingers, left and right, up and down... Mallory had no choice but to incredulously watch, still gritting her teeth in anticipation for them to lunge... only to recognize a strange tugging sensation already on her chest! The hands had just been distracting her, as another finger-walked up her cleavage! "HEY!" Mallory yelped, but while the hand skittered off, her voice was lost in the cackling of the skulls floating close, all eyeless sockets trying to catch a glimpse of her goods! Unclasped and disheveled, her bra only precariously remained over her chest and shoulders, and, much to Mallory's dismay, the undergarment soon became alight in a ghostly glow which swiftly manifested into more ghoulish hands! The hands slipped their fingers in the space between her bra and her boobs, wagging and taunting! She tried to shake them off, but swinging her ample chest from side to side not only caused the bra to slip even further from covering her, but also gave the skulls quite the show to gawk at! The hand made another show of wiggling its fingers, before finally grabbing hard and yanking the bra right off Mallory's body!

"NOOOOOO!" Mallory cried as her bare breasts flopped into full view! In the deathly chill around her, immediately her petal-pink nipples puffed up, drawing the eager eye socket of every skull orbiting her! The hands then reappeared, grabbing the whole of Mallory's massive melons, grabbing and bouncing her breasts up and down, gently squeezing and turning them in their grasp, seeming to delight in every shudder and gasp it elicited from her! Why would they want to do this?! Mallory wanted to scream but was too lightheaded to try! She was helpless to do anything but watch as translucent hands groped her bountiful bosoms, while others continued to stretch her panties deeper up her privates! So much all over her body, Mallory's senses were pushed to their limits!

Finally, with a deafening SHRRRIIIIIIP, her panties finally tore! "AHHHH!" She cried through a wave of cheers though the levitating skulls! She was naked, totally NAKED! In vain she tried to squeeze her knees together to hide anything, just a shred of modesty, but the hands kept her in place, kept everything visible!

With the tearing of the panties which had suspended her hips so, the impact of finally dropping sent ripples through her doughy rear! The cold wind along her beleaguered butt crack was hardly a relief, when after not even a moment's pause she felt the hands grab onto her buttocks, what amounted to fingers hung rily digging into the supple flesh before squeezing and gently spreading them! "Ahhh!" Mallory whimpered as the hands continued to grope and knead her plump ass cheeks, and a single finger began touching and tickling in between! Mallory's pulse beat so hard and loud she felt it drowning out every thought in her brain! Every squeeze, every impish flick sent spirals of sickening heat up through her whole body! As she unsuccessfully tried to wiggle her hips so that the hands wouldn't reach so intimately, though, one of the hands stroking her inner thigh finally drifted all the way up! "Mmph!" Mallory almost choked as the ghostly hand began rubbing at her privates! "N- no! Not- NOT THERE! AHH!" Mallory's voice pitched as the hand rubbed her faster, sending horrible shimmers through her hips! All over her body, the hands rubbed harder, faster, so solid yet so unnatural, like static electricity stabbing across her skin!

In that moment, the only coherent thought that could form in her head... was Candice... how much she'd desperately needed her... Candice... What would she do... focus... you summoned them... now banish them!

Quickly, stifling a moan and immediately failing from another squeeze to her breasts, Mallory glanced at the grass beneath her, only to find the tome had been pulled further away from her! With the hands holding her, she couldn't so much dream of reading it! But wait... at the edge of the shadows beside her, Mallory caught a glimpse of the second volume! There HAD to be something in there that could end this waking nightmare!

Just barely able to move her wrists and elbows, Mallory strained to reach the second tome just barely within reach, struggling harder as the hands continued to grope her all over, as the visitor at her back door kept knocking, as the hand against her privates rubbed harder and harder and... oh God... Panting, Mallory fought to focus, her fingers barely grazing the bottom of the book... bit by bit, she managed to inch it closer, closer still... SMACK! "OUCH!" Mallory yelped and spasmed as one of the hands gripping her butt suddenly gave the cheek a hard slap that knocked her senses back out of alignment! The ghosts laughed louder, the hands squeezed harder... focus... through the blend of terror and titillation, Mallory continued to nudge the second tome closer, until she could just barely flip open the front cover... "MMPH! Ohh..." Her attempts at turning the pages were constantly stymied by the hands' arrhythmic rubbing all over her, especially across her butt... her private place... Between the undead shades intermittently blotting out the meager candle light and the absolute assault on all senses, the spanking, the squeezing, it... it was so hard to read! But Mallory kept flipping pages best she could...

Wait, there, as certain dog-eared page! She remembered that one! She remembered it being a powerful invocation, that's why she marked it, but what did the page say?! More hands began rubbing her inner thighs, another rough rub made her knees to buckle inward... Biting her lip so hard she worried she'd bleed, Mallory tried make out the words on the page, to make sense of the words while her head continued to spin around and around, her body being squeezed and groped from every angle, pushing the white-hot feeling further and further...

Finally, she got it! It was only one phrase repeated four times! Though she tried to put strength in her voice, it trembled all the same as she read aloud: "Sp- s- spiritus... abeunt!"

Immediately, something changed. The laughter roared on, but the intervals between each chuckle lengthened just slightly, as if creating more space for echoes. Though the hands which groped her continued, she felt those around her shoulders slacken just barely! They were scared! That meant whatever she was saying was going to work and send them back beyond! "Spiritus abeunt!" Mallory again called out, buoyed by a new rush of bravery! She could end this! She WOULD end this! She would show these undead jerks who's boss! An otherworldly wind blasted the book away and out of sight, but it was too late - Mallory already knew just what to say! "Spiritus abeunt-" Mallory again cried, nearly cut off by the hand at her crotch suddenly digging against her clit harder! Be it fear or rage compelling them, the ghosts in the fog around her began to float faster around the graveyard, and all the hands playing with her sensitive regions

began gripping harder, rubbing faster! Mallory opened her mouth for the final recitation, but all that escaped her mouth was a reluctant moan! "AHHHHHN!" Tears formed in the corners of Mallory's eyes as the hands on her chest began twisting her boobs more fervently, and those against her crotch and between her cheeks rubbed more fiercely! Surreality stirred all throughout Mallory's insides, as impossible sensations built and built to a fever pitch! Her tummy was all knots, like she was being pulled apart and together and apart... Through the mounting arousal, she screamed at the top of her lungs, "SPIRITUS ABEUNT!!!", and the hands all over her body squeezed at once, overflowing her body with an unyielding eruption of pain and warmth... before it all stopped.

A moment passed with no feeling at all, as though she'd slipped between what was real and imagined and existed in some strange limbo devoid of sensation. Then all of a sudden, it was over. The world was quiet... and she was real again.

Hesitantly, Mallory's eyes eased open. Holding her breath, she glanced up and around. She was still at the graveyard, but the shadows had parted, as she again beheld an overcast noontime sky. Not a single sound broke the calm around her - it was over. With a sigh of relief so immense it nearly knocked her unconscious, Mallory collapsed onto her back, all the horrible sensations ebbing away, an involuntary smile spreading across her lips. It was over... the horrible nightmare was over... not just over, but over for good! She'd done it, she'd actually done it! And yet, something was off... The wind felt... well, she felt it way more than she should... and the damp grass against her back... her bare skin...

"Ah... ah, AH!" The realization hit Mallory in one fell blow, as she jumped to her feet and haphazardly covered herself with her hands! She was still naked! Scanning the grass, Mallory streaked from gravestone to gravestone, looking for her stolen clothes but finding nothing at all, not even her backpack or the ritual materials! Quickly, she consulted the second tome; in the better light, she could make out the additional blurb the previous patron left in the page margin: "Dispel ornery spirits. Effective but last resort - will dispel both them... and anything they've touched..."

With another mighty sigh - this one FAR more resigned than the previous - Mallory's head fell back in dismay. At least she hadn't tried it at home where she could have lost more stuff... only bright side she could think of at the moment, what with now having to make the run home butt-ass naked. Well, she still had her boots... and the books... better than nothing at all, right? Although a single tome was hardly enough to cover even both nipples if she held it up to her chest, and they were so heavy to hold with single hands... Idly, she quickly skimmed the tomes for any evocation that might conjure a fresh pair of jeans and an XL t-shirt... no such luck, of course! She also made the unfortunate discovery that she'd accidentally skipped over what might as well have been the previous reader's most important blurb, written right on the inside of the front cover: turns out everything in the tomes, she was supposed to read almost entirely in reverse - right to left and bottom to top, not the other way around - or else any ritual would bring the opposite of the intended effect. She felt sympathy, then, for the previous reader, who probably also found that out the hard way...

Just thinking back on the horrible cavalcade of cackling hands made Mallory's knees buckle! Still trying to catch her breath, Mallory squatted low behind a gravestone, worried that anyone might come by and see some freaky purple-haired chick chilling naked in the middle of a rained-out cemetery! Squatting and rubbing her goosebump-riddled skin, she shuddered, still feeling the ghosts' evil touch all over, and she pondered over the biggest question at hand: how was she ever going to explain this to anyone? She'd lived it, and even she was having a hard time believing it all! Real ghosts, real supernatural happenings... No one would believe her, and it was a defeating thought... After all of that, too, she still couldn't answer the other massive question of if she truly had done what she set out to do in the first place: free herself from any paranormal element which might be causing her misfortune? Did those ghosts ever have a hand in all the other times she'd been stripped or worse, or did she accidentally summon them there and then? What happened in that graveyard was a whole other order than anything that'd happened to her before... it seemed like it was only what she'd done that brought those spirits there, but how to know... Uncertainty churned like restless ocean waves within her - how could she ever know? What if she'd even gone too far, and now there was a target on her butt from all kinds of forces she now KNEW existed? What if she w

oke up right then and there, and it was all some bad-sushi-fueled night terror? What to believe, what to do now... Questions upon questions buzzed through her head nonstop and made her feel so small, so hopeless!

In the middle of the fracas, however, a single thought silenced all the others... did it even matter? Whether or not there truly was ever anything supernatural behind her misfortunes, quite frankly, she didn't care anymore! Besides, her luck wasn't really that bad after all, was it? She'd had some rough times, but she also had lots of good ones! And without them, she'd never have met Candice, the best part of her life! Maybe supernatural stuff did exist, maybe it was all in her crazy imagination after all, but whatever the case, her life was her own, and she was gonna live it, dammit! One step at a time, and it'll all work out... it wasn't her voice, but then it was: one step at a time. Besides, if those pervert phantoms ever came back, she knew she could give 'em what they deserve...

Finally, Mallory stood up from behind the gravestones with both tomes hugged over her chest - as much as she'd never admit it, the cold air was kind of soothing on her aching privates... On legs still weak and wobbling, Mallory began her naked dash home, over grass and concrete, across sidewalks and between pedestrians sneaking glimpses as she streaked past! Of course it was humiliating, and would probably definitely restart rumors of the town's resident purple-haired nudist making the rounds again, but something about this time was different - not that she was getting used to streaking, of course! This time, though, it was like Mallory was experiencing the feeling vicariously, like watching someone else behind glass. Maybe she was crazy, maybe she was out of her mind, but somehow public nudity didn't seem like the biggest problem to her. Keep going, and soon it would all pass, one foot after the other, one step at a time...